

BOOK REVIEW

ADA V. SEGRE. 2006. **The Gardens at San Lorenzo in Piacenza, 1656-1665**. In two parts: (ISBN 13: 978-0-88402-302-9, hbk.; ISBN 10: 0-88402-302-8, pbk.). Dunbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C., U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.doaks.org; also available at www.hup.harvard.edu, 800-405-1619). \$95.00. 107 pp., color photos, maps, and illustrations throughout with accompanying Manuscript Planting Notebook, 12 1/2" × 9 1/2".

Incredibly researched and exquisite in design, *The Gardens at San Lorenzo in Piacenza 1656–1665* was conceived by author Ada Segre while completing her Ph.D thesis on seventeenth-century Italian flower gardens. Coming across a reference to the existence of a five-hundred year old Italian planting notebook manuscript, she realized it could be of importance in revealing horticultural practices of the third quarter of seventeenth century Italy. Though too late to include in her thesis, she promised to return to this enigmatic garden journal housed in Dumbarton Oaks's Rare Books Collection and give it the comprehensive research it deserved. She spent two years on just finding evidence concerning the ownership of the garden described in the document. The evidence pointed to Margherita de' Medici Farnese, duchess of Parma and Piacenza, cities located south of the Po River in northern Italy.

The hardback book (with dust jacket), and reproductions in sepia tone of the 1663 garden design on the front and back endpapers, represents Segre's study. Inserted in the back of the study book are four painstaking, computer-driven topographical reconstructions of the flower gardens: 1656, *the Nine Star Garden* 1662, *the Nine Star Garden* 1664, and *the Star-centered garden in 1665*. Accompanying the study book is the paperback reproduction of the anonymous Italian gardening notebook, also in sepia to capture the feel and look of the original. This seventeenth-century notebook records the plantings of three flower gardens at San Lorenzo. Here you may detect for yourself, and follow along with her investigations of these drawings and who might have made them. Both books are incased in a rich oxblood buckram-covered slipcase with blind embossing on the front.

Segre's reconstruction is supplemented by appendices that provide transcriptions and translations of the original manuscript, manuscript sources, and list of Plants at San Lorenzo, 1656–1665. Her work in this volume is a significant contribution to the field of garden conservation that will be of interest to specialists in landscape architecture, ornamental horticulture, and cultural history as well as to the general reader and book collector.—Linny Heagy, *Linny/Designer, Illustrator, email: a0005835@airmail.net*.